



From left to right, R. P. Soejono,  
H. R. van Heekeren, and W. G. Solheim II

# Hendrik Robert van Heekeren

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R. P. SOEJONO

The friendly spirit and cooperation I found from scientists as well as from the simple peoples in small villages all over Indonesia will stay with me forever. (van Heekeren's Ceremonial Lecture Dr. H. C., University of Indonesia, 1970)

**D**R. H. R. van Heekeren passed away in Heemstede on 10 September 1974 after a four month's illness. His attendance at the "Symposium on Modern Quaternary Research in Southeast Asia," which was held on 16 May 1974 in Groningen, was the last activity of his lifetime in the field of science. The paper he gave during this symposium dealt with problems of the chronology of Indonesian prehistory, which he always considered as being in its formative stage, with research on this subject continuously intensifying. His work of writing the second edition of his book *The Bronze-Iron Age of Indonesia* (first published in 1958), being done in cooperation with R. P. Soejono at the N.I.A.S. (The Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences, Wassenaar), has not yet been accomplished, in spite of his earnest desire to have the new edition published as quickly as possible. He fell ill upon his return from Groningen, making it impossible for him to continue his writing at the N.I.A.S., and this illness ended with his death. It was not expected that he would pass away so soon and so suddenly, as a few days before his death he seemed to be improving and was looking forward to his next visit, the following year, to Indonesia, which he had always considered as his second homeland. Unhappily, this plan was never fulfilled.

Van Heekeren was born at Semarang, Java, on 23 June 1902. His career as a prehistorian began when he became interested in prehistoric artifacts and monuments while an employee of a tobacco estate at Jember (Eastern Java). He was also a very enthusiastic naturalist and mountain climber, a good combination for an archaeologist. He became attached to some local elders whom he considered as his

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"gurus" because of their profound knowledge of the local environment as well as their guidance to the world of thinking of the local people. These daily contacts with the villagers and the growing appreciation toward their simple way of life had left a mark in his character which he carried on during his whole lifetime. His first publication, in the periodical *Djawa* (1931), presented a description of megalithic monuments of Besuki which he had seen. Since that article he published sixty-nine papers, two-thirds of which were concerned with the finds and problems of prehistory in Indonesia.

As an amateur prehistorian van Heekeren worked during his holidays and financed his studies out of his own pocket. In spite of his amateur beginning in archaeology, he showed a great devotion to his work and proceeded in a systematic way, producing results which were a considerable contribution to prehistoric research in Indonesia.

In the period before World War II his activities, in an initial stage of development, aimed to fill the gaps in the framework of Indonesian prehistory. Until the outbreak of the war there were still many gaps in the data, although prehistorians like P. V. van Stein Callenfels, A. N. J. Th. à Th. van der Hoop, and W. J. A. Willems had already undertaken a wide variety of research in the field. During this period van Heekeren concentrated his studies primarily on rock shelters at Besuki and in southern Sulawesi. The results of his excavations in those areas have enriched our view of a stage in the culture of the epipalaeolithic in Indonesia. With the results from the shelters of Ara, Karasa, and Sarippa in southern Sulawesi van Heekeren attempted to demonstrate a development in stages of Toala Culture, beginning with crude implements and progressing to tool forms which were the result of a refined technique of tool manufacture.

During his period as an amateur prehistorian, van Heekeren was impressed by the personal appearance and popularity of van Stein Callenfels. At that time prehistoric discoveries attracted much public attention. Van Heekeren regretted that van Stein Callenfels neglected to write full reports on his archaeological discoveries. Except for his reports on excavations of caves at Sampung and Perak, van Stein Callenfels mostly composed accounts on archaeological findings that appeared in scientific and popular journals, or gave statements to local newspapers about his investigations. Van Heekeren wrote in his diary during a visit to Macassar that van Stein Callenfels was just a showman seeking popularity. At the Macassar harbor he saw van Stein Callenfels arriving "mighty and impressive leaning against the rails of the steamer accompanied by Miss Theodora Benson, writer of 'In The East my Pleasure Lies'. . . ." Six months later van Stein Callenfels died in Colombo.

Van Heekeren and others recognized Willems as the best fieldworker in prewar Indonesia, because of his solid technical system of fieldwork, but unfortunately Willems was not in the position to become productive due to the brevity of his period of work in Indonesia. It was obvious that Willems' systematic approach (surveying, excavating, reporting of archaeological objects) had inspired van Heekeren, especially when he continued his research after World War II.

During the war van Heekeren was a prisoner of the Japanese, and was sent with many other prisoners to work on the "Railroad of Death" from Thailand into Burma. Many of the Dutch prisoners, to help keep their minds off their precarious situation, pursued hobbies such as collecting butterflies or plants. Van Heekeren,

naturally enough, looked for prehistoric artifacts while doing his work on the railroad. For some reason the Japanese commandant forbade the keeping of collections and set a very heavy punishment if any collections were discovered. Nevertheless, van Heekeren managed to keep a very small collection of stone tools that he had found. He discovered some palaeolithic-like implements and managed to keep them in his possession throughout the rest of the war. He published a note on these implements in the *Illustrated London News* shortly after the end of the war. When he and other Dutch prisoners were being evacuated from their prison camp to a hospital camp, their ship stopped briefly in Manila, at which time van Heekeren was able to visit H. Otley Beyer, the Philippine prehistorian. He showed Beyer the tools and allowed him to have photographs taken of them. Beyer did not hear from or of van Heekeren for several years thereafter and, not knowing of the publication of these tools in the *Illustrated London News*, published the pictures with an article summarizing the work done by van Heekeren in Indonesia that had relevance to Philippine prehistory (*Journal of East Asiatic Studies*, 1952). These articles on van Heekeren's finds eventually led to the Thai-Danish Archaeological Expedition, starting in 1959, in which van Heekeren took part. During the filming of "The Bridge on the River Kwai," Karl Heider, a graduate student in archaeology at Harvard, was visiting the area of van Heekeren's finds to locate the site. He was hired as a bit player to act the part of van Heekeren finding the palaeolithic-like tools. Unfortunately, this scene was edited out of the final version of the film.

Returning to Indonesia after the end of World War II, van Heekeren continued his research there until he went to the Netherlands in 1956. During this period he fully devoted himself as a professional to the world of prehistory. As he was working by himself as prehistorian of the Archaeological Service of Indonesia, he gave his full attention to nearly the entire prehistoric period, from the palaeolithic up to early metal times, which he called the "bronze-iron period." He was assisted by Basuki, who became his most efficient collaborator. My initial meeting with van Heekeren was in 1951, when I was a student at the University of Indonesia in Jakarta. My first impression of van Heekeren was that he was a very kind and friendly person, somebody who appreciated other people's problems, and that he had impressive powers of conversation. We often discussed research problems in Indonesia and concluded that prehistoric research should be promoted among Indonesian students. There was then the strong feeling of the need to train Indonesian students within a short period in order to avoid a gap if Dutch experts had to transfer their tasks to Indonesian successors. I was able to participate in his fieldwork at important sites in Java (Sangiran, Trinil, Ngandong, Jetis) and in Bali (sarcophagus sites). Through fieldwork, discussions, and private lectures, I became acquainted during this period with van Heekeren's ideals, methods of working, scientific prestige, and his personal character. Van Heekeren loved his career and enjoyed working in the field, where he used to stay among the village people. Every stage of fieldwork gave new results or raised certain problems to be considered. Van Heekeren was constantly seeking sounder solutions of problems, as many of them remained to him unsettled hypotheses. As the only professional, van Heekeren had to cope with the prehistory of Indonesia in all its aspects and problems. He was very enthusiastic when I decided to devote myself to prehistoric research, and gained confidence that his tasks would be carried on. Though the

research budget was very limited, van Heekeren was able to find extra funds, mainly drawn from his own pocket money, for my field training.

The most conspicuous results of his research between 1946 and 1956 are as follows:

- The data on the Toala Culture were supplemented with excavations at Leang Bola Batu and Leang PattaE. During the excavations in the rock shelters of southern Sulawesi, rock paintings were discovered for the first time.
- On the basis of Th. Verhoeven's reports, systematic excavations were conducted for the first time by van Heekeren on caves of Flores, namely at Liang Rundung and Liang Soki. The caves in Flores mainly contained crude flake-blade industries. Human skeleton and small animal bones were also found in Flores caves.
- Systematic excavation of a neolithic settlement at Kalumpang was undertaken. The first excavation of this site was done by van Stein Callenfels; van Heekeren, among others, tried here to uncover a settlement with a continuing neolithic tradition, making and using stone adzes, long into the historic period. (The late dating of this site was based on the analysis of the site by a soil specialist; several prehistorians question this late dating.)
- Flakes of the palaeolithic stage were discovered for the first time, in the area around Cabbenge (southern Sulawesi; formerly spelled Tjabenge), associated with fossil remains of *Elephas*, *Stegodon*, *Testudo*, *Anoa*, the giant pig, and others. Van Heekeren's colleague in this research, who has made a great contribution to palaeontological research in southern Sulawesi, was D. A. Hooijer. He also participated in the last fieldwork carried out by van Heekeren in Indonesia in 1972–1973.
- Increased research activities on the Pacitan (formerly spelled Patjitan) Culture supplemented the number of implements and sites containing Pacitan tools outside the area of the Baksoka River. Van Heekeren made a more specialized division of the choppers into two characteristic types, the Flatiron Chopper and Tortoise Chopper.
- Supplementary data on burial systems in the palaeometalic period were gathered through excavations of sarcophagi in Bali and urn burials at Anyer (formerly spelled Anjer), West Java. Van Heekeren was the first to reconstruct a system of primary burial in urns in Indonesia.

Besides his duties as a prehistorian at the Archaeological Service, van Heekeren was appointed Curator of the collection of prehistoric artifacts at the Jakarta Central Museum. As Curator he supplemented the catalogue of the prehistoric collection and published a guidebook on life in the prehistoric period in Indonesia, entitled *Prehistoric Life in Indonesia* (1955). In 1953 van Heekeren attended the Fourth Congress of Far-Eastern Prehistorians, held in Manila in conjunction with the Eight Pacific Science Congress, where he met many of the new, postwar archaeologists of Southeast Asia. At the formation of the Far-Eastern Prehistory Association immediately following the Congress, he was elected the representative of Indonesia to the FEPA.

Van Heekeren was one of those scholars who had a wide knowledge of his field and who carried out his projects systematically. Nearly all of his projects in the field were followed almost immediately by written reports of results. His field programs were always well planned and timed to produce the maximum results possible. Careful planning and organization of projects were characteristics of van Heekeren that were not always shared by his contemporaries. As a synthesis of his own work and that of many other scholars whose reports were scattered in all kinds of periodicals, van Heekeren brought out two books on the prehistory of Indonesia: *The Stone Age of Indonesia* (1st ed. 1957, 2nd ed. 1972) and *The Bronze-Iron Age of Indonesia* (1958). As can be seen by reading several of the reviews of these books, they were not well received by many who were not well acquainted with the data on Indonesian prehistory (see Solheim's review of the second edition of *The Stone Age of Indonesia* elsewhere in this issue). They are, however, the major sources for approaching Indonesian prehistory, in that they bring together between two covers widely scattered data from the work of the several specialists on Indonesian prehistory. Although very few prehistories have been written of other countries in Southeast Asia, in these books van Heekeren presented the prehistory of Indonesia in the context of prehistoric development of Southeast Asia as a whole. Because of Indonesia's isolation at the time, van Heekeren did not have the opportunity to practice advanced techniques during his period of fieldwork after World War II. But he was always eager to follow the progress of research over areas of Southeast Asia as well as the impact of new research methods to gain improved results.

Van Heekeren carried out his research activities in Indonesia under widely varying conditions. He was able to overcome all kinds of difficulties in the field due to his love for his work and particularly to his love for Indonesia and the Indonesians. During his fieldwork he always considered and conducted himself as a close friend of the local population, and he always adjusted himself to all levels of the local population, wherever he worked. He recounted his experiences during fieldwork in Indonesia in two books: *Voetsporen aan de Kim* (1942) and *De Onderste Steen Boven* (1969). We can see very clearly his knowledge of and love for both nature and the people of Indonesia in these volumes.

Besides being an expert on the prehistory of Indonesia, van Heekeren also had working experience in several other areas, namely Africa (1948), the Antilles in Venezuela and Trinidad (1960), Thailand (1960-1962) and in Anatolia (1966). In recognition of his achievements in prehistoric research in Indonesia and his contribution to the completion of the prehistory of Southeast Asia, van Heekeren was awarded honorary doctorates at the State University of Leiden in 1965 and at the University of Copenhagen in 1967. While he was actively engaged with research in countries other than Indonesia, his heart was always in Indonesia. He paid other visits here in 1968 and 1970, during which he continued his work. His program in 1970 was carried out in the framework of a joint Indonesian-Netherlands program on the Palaeolithic of the eastern part of Indonesia. In the same year, after finishing this joint program, he received his Doctor Honoris Causa from the University of Indonesia in Jakarta.

Van Heekeren's last visit to Indonesia was for one year in 1972-1973. Being no longer young, he felt it his duty to train groups of the new generation of prehistorians in Indonesia. By passing on his knowledge to the young Indonesian

prehistorians through a series of lectures which he gave in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and Bali, he has given a major stimulus to Indonesian prehistorians. We will miss him.

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